(c) whether this new product will be cheaper and comfortable in comparison to polythene?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) No sir. However, research and development is going on in CSIR and other Institutions to produce bio-degradable plastics by addition of certain additives like starch, etc. in polythene.

Slow down in exports

872. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:
SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the rate of growth of exports targeted during 2007-08;

(b) what has been the actual performance during April-July, 2007;

(c) in which sectors there has been a slowdown and causes for slowdown, other than the strengthening of the rupee; and

(d) what is the remedial action taken or proposed to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The export target for the year 2007-08 has been set at US$ 160 billion with a growth rate of 27% over the achievement during the previous year.

(b) During April-July, 2007 exports reached a level of US$ 46.8 billion.

(c) During the first half of the current year, as per the latest available preliminary estimates, slow growth was registered in the export of a number of items including handicraft, a large number of textile items, Tea, Coffee, Fruits & Vegetables, Carpet, Plastic & Linoleum, Cashew, Cotton, Yarn, Fabric & made-ups, Jute Manufacturing including floor covering, etc. While the appreciation of the Rupee is one of the major reasons for the slowdown of exports, the other factors responsible such slowdown include movement of exchange rate and price level of competing countries, input prices, productivity, domestic capacity, foreign demand, etc.

(d) The Government has been interacting with the Export Promotion Councils on a regular basis to ascertain the problems faced by them in respect of export of specific commodities. Based on their suggestions appropriate measures are taken from time to time to fine tune export promotion strategy and improve export performance.

Geographical indication to Darjeeling Tea

873. SHRI PR. RAJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning to award geographical indication tag to the Darjeeling Tea;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government is implementing any project to boost the export of tea from India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Tea Board has developed a Logo known as the DARJEELING Logo for proper authentication of regional origin of Darjeeling tea. At a legal level, Tea Board is the owner of all intellectual property rights in the Darjeeling word and logo both in common law and under the provisions of the Trade marks Act. 1999; the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 and the Copyright Act, 1957.

(c) Government of India through Tea Board has been taking various steps to boost export of tea which include conducting promotional activities in the foreign markets, participation in international fairs/exhibitions, media publicity, buyer-seller meets, exchange of tea delegations between India and tea importing countries, lending promotional support to tea exporters in their marketing efforts.

Tea Board is also implementing a scheme for providing incentive for production of orthodox tea for ensuring the availability of export quality orthodox tea in adequate quantities. The Government is also assisting tea exporters towards meeting the additional transport and handling charges incurred for teas exported through Inland Container Deport (ICD), Amingaon in Assam.

Agreement with Vietnam on cashewnut

874. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a comprehensive agreement has been executed between India and Vietnam for production, processing and export of cashew nut;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the State-wise details of the measures being taken by Government for increasing the production of cashew nut and the achievement in this regard;

(d) whether Government would also contemplate the possibility of production and processing of cashew nut in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The Cashewnut Export Promotion Council of India (CPECI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Vietnam Cashew Association (VINACAS) and Brazil Cashew Association (SINDICAJU) for the formation of World Cashew Association with the object of increasing consumption of cashewnut, it's use as a food ingredient, research and development and enhancement of cashew trade worldwide.

(c) The Government is involved in developmental measures to augment cashew production in the country through implementation of centrally sponsored schemes for cashew in various States under the National Horticulture Mission (NHM). New plantation development and replanting old senile and uneconomical cashew gardens with high yielding varieties are the major programmes implemented by various States for increasing production and productivity of cashewnut. Details are given in the Statement *(See* below).